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v Swinton Lions

**National League Play-off Series,
Don Valley Stadium,
Friday, 20th September, Kick-off 7.15pm**



Play-off series sponsored by AMCO Corporation plc



Northern Ford Premiership Club of the Year

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view from the board

I WOULD like to welcome the directors, supporters and players of Swinton Lions back to Don Valley this evening.

Having not played in Sheffield for over 14 years they now appear here for the second time in less than a month.

Both teams will have high hopes of progressing through the Play-off series to the final at Widnes in a month's time.

If we can perform like we did against the Giants then Division One is certainly well within our capabilities.

The atmosphere at the Huddersfield game was superb and the players certainly responded to the occasion.

It's a shame that they couldn't maintain it for the last quarter of the game as they clearly had the Giants rattled.

The players certainly showed what they are capable of and did everyone proud, and I don't think that the supporters could have been much more pleased even if we'd won.

They were certainly a happier bunch than the Giants who seemed more intent on moaning about our programme content than praising our efforts.

It certainly makes a change to be harshly criticised rather than thanked by a visiting chairman, but life remains full of surprises.

A question that I have been asked a lot of late concerns the future viability of the club in the event that we are not successful in securing the final place in Division One.

Rather than attempting to initiate

merger talks with Whitehaven (if anyone from Huddersfield is reading, that was supposed to be a joke) we have been busy formulating budgets for next season regardless of the division we are to play in.

These will need to be adjusted slightly once we know where we are playing and rely upon the continuing support of the fans and sponsors.

This season we have been very successful in the corporate lounge on match-days but this hasn't always been backed up by good attendances.

Goldrush numbers have also been disappointing but are starting to show signs of improvement.

One of the major areas of cost remains our development work despite the recent decision of John Kain to leave the club.

The charitable trust that we set up is starting to show signs of success with a number of businesses pledging amounts of money and again I would like to call upon supporters to assist in this important area

by considering if they can afford a small monthly donation.

We know we must be doing something right if the number of Super League clubs who have contacted us over how to set up a trust is anything to go by.

Even the mighty Bradford Bulls have been in touch for advice, although not the Giants who, with a parachute payment handed to them, probably think they don't need to.

Enjoy the game and hopefully we'll be welcoming Barrow or Keighley here next week.



By Ian Swire, chairman,
SHEFFIELD EAGLES

Sheffield Eagles

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Chairman

Ian Swire

Directors

John Whaling
Ian Swire
Brian Aston
Steve Dickinson

Associate Directors

Ian Annis - Development
Chris Noble - Academy
Football Executive

Mark Aston

Chief Executive

Brian Aston

Marketing Manager

Angie Gregory

Lotteries

Tony Jackson (manager)

Accounts

Carol Simons

Head Coach

Howard Cartwright

Assistant Coach

Andy Tyers

Team Manager

Graham Hutton

Team Physios

Louise Carrington, Angie Green

Conductors

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Masseur

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Matchday Co-ordinator

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Matchday Presenters

Gary Sinclair and Richard Lee

Matchday Hosts

Steve Dickinson, Andrew Flower

Programme Editors

James Collins, Angie Gregory

mark aston's tubbs talk

Big guns are back for sudden-death shoot-out

I HAVE always said that you have to enjoy this game to play it well.

When you stop enjoying then it's time to stop playing. Well, today I think it may be a little different.

This is one I want to win. One the Eagles must win. Enjoyment, for once, comes second.

We played well against Huddersfield but we didn't win. Second doesn't count in sudden-death games like tonight.

I'm disappointed that we didn't make the top nine and an automatic place in the First Division next season.

But we didn't - and we still have a chance of a place thanks to the Play-offs. It's not going to be easy.

Don't look at the league table and see that Swinton Lions finished well below us.

That table doesn't count for anything now - it's what happens out there for the next 80 minutes.

We beat the Lions twice this season but we made hard work of the win at Don Valley.

Swinton come here with nothing to lose and they will be up for it, make no mistake.



They finished the league season with a good win the other week so we can't take them lightly, but we have the advantage of playing at home.

This is the biggest game of the season - we want to be in the First Division.

That's why tonight I'm hoping to have out our strongest and most experienced side.

The last two weeks we've trained hard and selection is being based on the fittest and those who can give that little extra for the Eagles.

If all has gone well, Johnny Bruce is coming back, and

Wayne Flynn, Andy Poynter and even Mark Aston are back in contention!

What we are looking at are experienced players, and that's what you need in Play-off games - players who will deliver the goods on the day and not get intimidated.

Some of you might be surprised if I make it into the 17.

I've had my problems with some old injuries that keep coming back this season but I've been training hard and the Play-offs have always been my aim.

I'm really excited by the way training has gone and I want to be out at Don Valley again in front of Eagles fans.

We're going to have a big push on these Play-offs and we want to get to the final at Halton Stadium, Widnes.

But first off we've got to beat Swinton - so get behind the lads as you did against Huddersfield.

That was great and we need more of it tonight.

Tubbs

spotlight on the visitors

1928 ... the year of the Lions' pride

Tonight sees the return of Swinton Lions to the Don Valley, the last but one side the Eagles have played. But that is one of the anomalies of the qualifying Play-Off system.

Last time the two met Sheffield squeaked a win over our 15th-position visitors, although Phil Veivers was not happy with his side's performance.

Because of a bad start the Lions are actually further down the table than their more recent results would perhaps have placed them.

However this has not always been the case. Swinton Lions have a long and proud history with records to their name.

They were the first club to win the Challenge Cup in the 20th century, beating their local rivals Salford, 16-8 in the 1900 final.

Swinton also appeared in three successive finals, 1926 to 1928, winning twice.

The first two were against Oldham. In the 1926 final heavy rain and extremely strong winds plagued the whole match. Swinton won the toss and elected to play with the wind at their backs.

The result was that every time Oldham tried to kick to relieve their lines, the ball blew back over their heads.

Having finally forced their way up field, Oldham gained a penalty but kicking for goal against such a wind proved futile.

Bizarrely, an attempted drop-goal by Swinton saw the ball rebound off the crossbar straight into their hooker's arms and he walked over the line.

A further penalty for Swinton was struck from the halfway line, with the help of the wind. By the second half Oldham were drained and could manage only an unconverted try.

The following year Oldham gained revenge, beating Swinton 26-7 at Central Park, Wigan in front of over 33,000 fans.

1928 was, however, a real glory year for the Lions. They re-took the Challenge Cup, beating Warrington 5-3 and the whole team performed superbly all season.

As well as the Challenge Cup, they picked up the Championship, Lancashire Cup and the Lancashire League Cup. They are only one of

three teams to ever scoop all four cups on offer in a season.

Swinton's last appearance in a Challenge Cup Final was in 1992 when they matched Leeds with four goals apiece.

The Leeds victory came through the only try of the match and was scored down the wing by the legendary Eric Harris.

Challenge Cup Finals had been played at Wembley stadium since 1929, but because of the imminent departure of the British Lions on an Australian tour, this one had to be played a month early and was taken back to Central Park.

Sadly, Swinton never got to play at Wembley.

The club went on to win other honours, principally the Championship in 1931, 1935, 1963 and 1964. In the 1980s they yo-yo-ed back and forth between the old Divisions One and Two and this was the start of the problems which have troubled them to the present day.

No doubt Phil Veivers will be wanting his 21st-century Lions to try to emulate some of their forebears' old cup-tie tactics and maul a few Eagles tonight!

eagles in action



Try time: Guy Adams
scores against the Giants

GUTSY Eagles ended their Northern Ford Premiership season by giving arch-rivals Huddersfield Giants the fright of their lives.

The Eagles eventually went down 38-18 to the full-timers but for 60 minutes looked capable of pulling off a Giant-slaying against their unbeaten opponents.

The odds were stacked against them with a number of key players injured.

Passions ran high among players from both sides, with bitterness still fresh in the hearts of both clubs three years after the ill-fated merger.

Eagles held back Huddersfield with controlled defence but NFP leading points scorer Hefin O'Hare began the onslaught with a try.

Sheffield had a chance when Giants' Chris Thorman lost the ball in the tackle and Ian Thompson gained 80 metres with a sensational sprint, but it was to amount to nothing.

Then a magical 10-minute spurt provided two tries and two conversions and a dream eight-point lead against only the second team ever to go unbeaten in the league in British rugby league history.

Guy Adams and Darren Callaghan

were the try-scoring heroes in the first half.

Adams took advantage of a Richard Goddard break after which he powered over the line from a play-the-ball.

A Huddersfield touchdown from Rob Roberts just before the break narrowed the gap, and Steve McNamara's conversion made it 12-10.

After the break an arrogant pass from Huddersfield stand-off Stanley Gene was intercepted by Scott Rhodes who ran 80 metres before diving over the line.

Fitness began to take its toll for part-time Sheffield against the full-time Giants.

Ex-Leeds Rhino and recent Commonwealth Games England rugby sevens squad member Marcus St Hilaire got his name on the board from a Steve McNamara pass.

Soon after, Gene made up for his earlier mistake with a try and the victory was sealed with a Heath Cruckshank try which McNamara converted.

The final nail in the coffin came seconds from the hooter from Thorman. McNamara got his fifth conversion to end the scoring.

match facts

Eagles 18 ... Huddersfield 38

Eagles: I Brown; Hurst, Kite, C Brown, Thompson; Callaghan, Rhodes; Howieson, Carroll, Trasler, Raleigh, Adams, Goddard. Subs: Singleton, Kershaw, Tilyer, Brent.

Huddersfield: St Hilaire; O'Hare, Crabtree, Cooper, Whittaker; Gene, Thorman; Sicker, Turner, Wittenberg, Atkins, Roberts, Steve McNamara. Subs: Cruckshank, Molyneux, March, Rice.

Scorers: Eagles: Tries - Adams, Callaghan, Rhodes; Conversions - Goddard 3; Huddersfield: Tries - O'Hare, Roberts, St Hilaire, Gene (2), Thorman; Conversions - McNamara 5. **Referee:** Ben Thaler (Wakefield). **Attendance:** 1,065.

Mark Aston was pleased with his team's performance and can certainly be optimistic about their play-off chances.

"We were the best team for 60 minutes. We took them to the cleaners. From one to 17, our players were outstanding and did what we believed they could do for a long time."

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 your support**

SHEFFIELD Eagles would like to thank all our sponsors and corporate guests for their support – both on matchdays and at non-matchday events – throughout the past 12 months. The support of the business community in Sheffield and the surrounding area is, and will continue to be, vital to the club's future survival and success. We look forward to seeing you all again at forthcoming events and once again next season here at Don Valley.

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from the press box



with rugby league writer James Collins

**I'm just
 long-ing
 for an end
 Season has gone on and on**

I'm a rugby league fan – get me out of here! So here we are on a hiding to nothing. Welcome to Swinton. The Eagles should beat them but will the club be the winner? I hope I'm wrong, but I can't see – on the evidence of previous games against Swinton – there being a bumper crowd for tonight's game.

There's little chance that the club will make a profit out of this game and money does matter to keep this club alive.

If you're here and reading this then I think you really care about Sheffield Eagles. And you've got a well-planned diary.

The season has gone on too long and now the men in Red Hall are dragging out

the play-offs for the last place in new First Division.

There really does seem to be a streak of sadism about the Red Hall mafia.

Can't you see them sitting around a shiny boardroom table saying: "Let's test the fans' loyalty. Let's see how long we can drag out the season."

"We'll start in December, invent a meaningless cup and finish long after Blackpool Illuminations have been switched on!"

Maybe it's a cunning plan to make everyone welcome the switch to summer rugby – keeping the season going into the gloomy, cold days of autumn.

With a bit more creative thinking they could have delayed the play-off finals until December and made it a full-year season.

There are undercurrents in the game at the moment that cause me concern.

In one section of the game's 'trade press' there seems to be a campaign to fiddle with the rules yet again.

Certain people seem to want to abandon the current 10-metre rule and return to a pre-1992 five-metre stand-off or even a flexible defensive line taken back to the next 10-metre gridline marked on the pitch.

A solution I've seen described in print as "simple and neat". Help – is it April the first?

It seems – the way the argument goes – that we are seeing too many tries scored because the defensive line is held too far back. I see nothing wrong with tries being scored. I don't want to see dull, defence-dominated low-scoring games.

Let's go back to unlimited tackles and squat, beer-belly forwards lumbering on and 'sticking it up the jumper'. And, perhaps most important, if we went to a five-metre or a flexible rule it could spell the end of the career of the fan who attends every game just to shout at the ref 'get 'em back'.

Who would ever know where 'back' was? Is nothing sacred in our game!





don valley team talk

Sheffield Eagles

Team T G DG

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Aston
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jon Breakingbury
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Andy Brent
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gavin Brown
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jon Bruce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Darren Callaghan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adam Carroll
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wayne Flynn
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wayne Freeman
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Richard Goddard
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jack Howieson
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greg Hurst
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neil Kite
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Andy Poynter
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Andy Raleigh
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scott Rhodes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Richard Singleton
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mitchell Stringer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ian Thompson
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Simon Tillyer
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nick Turnbull
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paul Wells

Swinton Lions

Team T G DG

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rob Barraclough
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Danny Butler
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mick Nanyin
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jamie Stenhouse
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hugh Thorpe
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mike Whiteside
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Wingfield

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